

REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD

CENTRAL COAST REGION

(REGION 3)

**WATERSHED MANAGEMENT
INITIATIVE CHAPTER**

January 2002

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document constitutes the Watershed Management Initiative (WMI) Chapter of the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Region 3) for 2002. The Chapter is updated annually. The focus of this Chapter update is on improving implementation of nonpoint source pollution management, development of Total Maximum Daily Loads, increasing attention and resources to urban runoff and beach closure issues, and developing methods to improve the efficiency of regulatory activities. A WMI Chapter has been developed by the State Water Resources Control Board (State Board), each of the nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards (Regional Boards) and the US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) to comprise the Watershed Management Initiative “Integrated Plan.”

A five-year Strategic Plan guides the water resource protection efforts of the State Water Resources Control Board and the Regional Water Quality Control Boards. A key component of the Strategic Plan is a watershed management approach for water resources protection. Past State and Regional Board programs tended to be directed at site-specific problems. This approach was reasonably effective for controlling pollution from point sources. However, with diffuse nonpoint sources of pollutants, a new regulatory strategy was needed. To protect water resources within a watershed context, a mix of point and nonpoint source discharges, ground and surface water interactions, and water quality/water quantity relationships must be considered. These complex relationships present considerable challenges to water resource protection programs. The WMI is an attempt to integrate various regulatory and non-regulatory programs, promote cooperative and collaborative efforts within watersheds and focus limited resources on priority issues.

During initial implementation of the Watershed Management Initiative, each Regional Board identified priority watersheds in their Region, prioritized water quality issues, and developed watershed management strategies. The Central Coast Regional Board approved a list of six targeted watersheds at a regularly scheduled Board meeting on March 21 and 22, 1996. The original targeted watersheds were the San Lorenzo River, Pajaro River, Salinas River, Morro Bay, Santa Maria River, and Santa Ynez River. San Luis Obispo Creek and the South Coast of Santa Barbara County were subsequently added. These watersheds were selected because they were recognized as having significant water quality problems along with existing local efforts and commitments to address these problems (see Table 1-1 below). Region 3’s watershed management approach is described in more detail in *Section One* of the Chapter. Strategies for each watershed are described in *Section Two* of the Chapter.

In May 1998, Region 3 reorganized into watershed management areas. The watershed management areas are organized internally to implement a watershed management approach. This approach focuses on integrating existing regulatory responsibilities and other program activities to meet region-wide and watershed-specific objectives. Appropriate regulatory and non-regulatory programs and tools (e.g., permits, monitoring, education, and outreach) are being identified and integrated to address high priority issues. These programs and tools are being applied similarly throughout the region in some cases, and individually as appropriate in specific watersheds. Efforts being

developed or implemented in a given watershed are frequently pilots or phases of an effort to be transferred to other watersheds or to all watersheds in the region (e.g., Salinas River Watershed Management Strategy). Effective application and integration of the regulatory and non-regulatory programs and tools require coordination, stakeholder involvement, program management, planning, monitoring for effectiveness, and technical training on an on-going basis.

Several general activities have been identified as the Region's highest priorities, based on an assessment of problems in targeted watersheds and the region as a whole. Tasks or components of these activities are outlined for individual watersheds in *Section Two* and for programs in *Section Three*.

The following activities have been identified as priorities for State Fiscal Year 02/03 (July 1, 2002 to June 30, 2003):

1. Develop Total Maximum Daily Loads and implement plans for meeting TMDLs throughout the region;
2. Expand nonpoint source and regulatory activities to address urban runoff; focus increased funding and outreach to address beach closure and coastal water quality issues and compliance with Phase II of the NPDES Storm Water Program; increase resources to address hydromodification projects and urban development issues (CWA Section 401 water quality certifications and CEQA review);
3. Continue expansion of nonpoint source pollution management efforts that address impacts of sedimentation, nutrients and pesticides from agricultural activities and improve groundwater quality in the Salinas River Watershed;
4. Expand nonpoint source pollution management throughout the region and continue to solicit and manage nonpoint source contracts;
5. Continue expansion of the Central Coast Ambient Monitoring Program into a regional monitoring program that provides information on ambient conditions in the region's watersheds and coastal waters;
6. Streamline regulatory workload through development of boilerplates, general NPDES permits and WDRs, and revised WDR schedules where feasible;
7. Develop a riparian corridor protection policy, revise Basin Plan narrative groundwater objectives, and undertake highest priority Basin Plan amendments;
8. Expand regulatory activities to address discharges or potential threats to water quality from oil-industry cleanup sites, drug labs, dry cleaners and auto repair and dismantling operations, as feasible.

The most significant changes from priorities outlined in previous WMI Chapters are an increased focus on TMDLs, urban runoff and beach water quality issues, and internal efforts to streamline regulatory program activities. These three efforts are described below. There is also greater recognition of the need for more flexibility in the use of existing funding

- TMDLs: Development of TMDLs for the Region's many impaired waterbodies is in line with greater emphasis on TMDLs statewide. The Region now has a unit devoted to development of TMDLs. TMDL and Nonpoint Source staff are

coordinating efforts to increase stakeholder awareness of water quality issues, regulatory requirements, and appropriate management practices.

- Urban runoff and beach water quality issues: Increased monitoring (the Region's monitoring program has just completed the first five-year cycle of monitoring, covering the entire region, and state law requires counties to monitor high use beaches) has provided more data on the quality of the Region's waters, including beaches and coastal streams, and resulted in additional CWA Section 303(d) listings. In addition, Phase II of the NPDES Storm Water Program will require most of the Region's municipalities to obtain permits by 2003. Effective implementation of any regulatory program requires outreach and education, as well as regulatory oversight. Urban development is impacting creeks through increased volume of runoff, encroachment into floodplains and hydromodification projects. The Region receives very limited funding for oversight of these activities (issuance of CWA Section 401 water quality certification and CEQA review and response), yet such projects may have significant impacts on water quality and beneficial uses.
- Streamlining regulatory activities: A large percentage of staff time is devoted to writing and revising NPDES permits and Waste Discharge Requirements. A number of factors, including mandatory minimum penalty requirements (which have led to increased discharger challenges of proposed permits) and the rapid growth of the wine industry in the Central Coast area, have resulted in a substantial increase in the regulatory workload. Region 3 is developing boilerplate language and general permits to increase efficiency; however, there is also a need for greater flexibility in the use of existing resources, so that the highest priority water quality issues can be addressed.

Summary

Region 3 continues working to integrate and coordinate programs and functions, including permitting, enforcement, basin planning, monitoring and assessment, TMDLs, groundwater protection and nonpoint source pollution control within watersheds as appropriate for each watershed. Simultaneously, land disposal regulation, cost recovery, cost reimbursement, underground tank regulation, and above ground tank regulation activities are being implemented on a region-wide basis.

Additional funding is needed to support an adequate level of regulatory and non-regulatory activities in all watersheds in the region, particularly to focus and increase efforts where high priority problems have been identified or in higher priority watersheds. Additional funding for the activities itemized above would provide more opportunity for watershed-specific problem solving. In *Section Four, Resource Allocation Summary*, Table 4-1 displays anticipated and desired levels of funding by watershed, region-wide, and by program for State Fiscal Year 2002-03.

For more information or copies of the Watershed Management Initiative Chapter, contact Alison Jones, Watershed Coordinator for Region 3 at (805) 542-4646 or

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Table 1-1: Water Quality Concerns in Targeted Watersheds (highest priority watersheds are in bold type)

TARGETED WATERSHED	POLLUTANTS OF CONCERN	WATER QUALITY PROBLEMS
San Lorenzo River	Nutrients, sedimentation, pathogens	Erosion from roads and timber harvested areas, urban development and runoff.
Pajaro River	Sedimentation, heavy metals, nitrates	Erosion from inactive and abandoned mines, urban development and runoff, agricultural activities, hydromodification, gravel mining
Salinas River	Seawater intrusion, nitrates and minerals in groundwater, nutrients, pesticides, heavy metals, sedimentation	Overpumping of groundwater, agricultural activities, urban development and runoff, past mineral mining, gravel mining
Morro Bay	Sedimentation, pathogens, nutrients, heavy metals	Urban development and runoff, agricultural activities, septic systems
San Luis Obispo Creek	Nutrients, sedimentation	Urban development and runoff, agricultural activities, hydromodification
Santa Maria River	Sedimentation, nitrates	Erosion from reservoir operation, agricultural activities, urban development and runoff
Santa Ynez River	Sedimentation	Erosion from ranching and land development, habitat loss
South Coast (Santa Barbara County)	Pathogens	Urban development and runoff, illegal and unsanitary encampments, septic systems